



### Clapper Rail Project

After rather careful thought on the part of your Research Committee's chairman for a suitable study subject to suggest for your consideration, that of the present status of the California Clapper Rail in the San Francisco Bay region appears to be the most promising from a number of aspects. The great need for definite information on this subject is manifested by remarks coming up at nearly every one of our meetings. Here is an interesting bird whose main habitat lies at our doorstep, so to speak, that may be becoming depleted in numbers from various causes, but no one, I am sure, is in a position to give an accurate summary of its present and past status. There is so much interest in this bird all over our country and a worthwhile study of its status would comprise such a valuable, timely piece of work that the matter is now suggested for your consideration above all others.

Both sides of the question should be considered. While for many reasons this would be a fine species to study, the fact remains that the actual field work can only be undertaken by the Association's most active members, for the rail's habitat is marshland and much of the work will have to be done from boats at times of high tides. On the other hand, the study embraces much statistical, bibliographical and reference work which could be done by the less physically active members. It is in many ways regrettable that no Passerine species of bird, one that could easily be seen and studied by most of our members, can be suggested for study. But none appears to warrant our attention to the degree that the rail and some other water birds and birds of prey do. The status of most of our small land birds appears to be quite satisfactory.

May we then suggest for your consideration the matter of a thorough study of the Clapper Rail. This would necessarily be a long time study that could certainly not be completed in under a year. Its organization would require some time and if it should soon be adopted, we do not believe that we could arrange to commence active work before January first and we should plan to devote our concentrated, continued efforts to it at least through 1941, if we are to hope for worthwhile accomplishments. To be willing to continue this much purposeful effort is a prerequisite to a successful study that should be decided upon before the subject is adopted.

Any study of this sort needs a leader to arrange and to co-ordinate effort and to guide the individual workers. We are fortunate in this to have Mr. Gordon Bolander especially interested in a Clapper Rail study and willing to devote the time necessary to supervise it.

We can conceive that the rewards to all this effort will be more than the rightful feeling of satisfaction of a good job well done, but they will be a valuable scientific contribution, especially in the field of conservation, that might well be worth publishing in the form of a report which would resolve much well deserved credit to the Association.

Some suggestions for a Clapper Rail study may be presented in outline form below, in order to give an idea of its scope. The study should result in an inven-

tory of present rail habitat and populations and an estimate of the original habitat available. It is expected that what factors actually comprise good rail habitat, something now apparently unknown, will be developed by this study. For instance, we know that the Clapper Rail population of the marshes of South San Francisco Bay is now, and probably always was, much denser than that of the north bay, including San Pablo Bay. Yet these two areas appear superficially alike. It is probable that some factors, possibly differences in salinity of waters in turn affecting abundance of organisms upon which rail feed, are not the same, hence the rail populations differ. Matters like this upon which sound rail conservation can be founded should be brought out by this study.

This study should entail:

1. Estimating from old maps and charts the probable extent of original rail habitat in the San Francisco Bay region. This would be suitable work for physically inactive members. The entire area might be divided into counties for this purpose and one co-operator secure the information for each county. As an instance, take San Francisco County and consider probable rail habitat that originally existed in the Marina District, Downtown District, Third Street Channel, Islais Creek, Hunter's Point, etc. Counties included in the San Francisco Bay area are: San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Sonoma, Napa and Solano.

2. Estimating, by visiting all probable rail territory by foot and boat, etc., present available range. Spot it on maps and record acreage. This work would necessitate active workers and might be divided by counties as above.

3. Make population studies, accurate censuses on average areas of given sizes, for various parts of San Francisco Bay region from which an idea of the total present rail population may be computed after the total extent of present rail habitat is determined. Again, this work can be divided into counties and will have to be done by active members for the counts will have to be made from boats at periods of high tides.

4. Co-ordinating the above data, preparing maps and reports, etc., will naturally follow and will provide interesting work for some of the less physically active members.

5. Other special studies, perhaps each best confined to one worker, are suggested by the above, as follows:

1. Food habits.

2. Ecological requirements.

3. Enemies, natural and man-made. In this latter connection may be suggested: Predators, Oil or other pollution, Introduced Mussels (see De Groot, *Condor*, 1927, pages 266-267), Fires, Reclamation, etc.

4. Review of the literature and bibliography of the California Clapper Rail.

In closing, we wish to emphasize that it is not this committee's desire to drive the membership to work. We feel that many of our members are probably happy to continue in the future as we have in the past. We take no issue whatever with this thought. Our duty is simply to suggest matters like the above for your consideration and it is up to you to decide whether or not it is desirable for the Association to engage in them.

Respectfully submitted,

Research Committee, James Moffitt, Chairman.



## A *Zonotrichia's* Tail

On December 19, 1938, while removing from one of my banding traps in Benicia, California, a Golden-crowned Sparrow, *Zonotrichia coronato*, which I had banded on November 16, 1938, the bird made a sudden unexpected dart from my hand. Almost involuntarily in attempting to grasp the bird I secured only the entire set of tail feathers. During my banding operations similar accidents have occurred three or four times, probably signifying lack of skill on my part in

handling birds. However, at the present time, I believe I have learned the technique of handling live birds so that this is not likely to occur often.

The bird which lost his tail, as stated above, I caught again on January 5, 1939, seventeen days later. On that date (using a ruler) the tail measured almost exactly one inch in length. Again on January 25 I caught this same bird and found the new tail to be three inches in length, nearly, if not quite, full grown. I was rather surprised to learn that within a period of six weeks this visitor to my traps was able to regrow his caudal appendage.

Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California.



### A Harlequin Duck in the Sierra

On October 20th while driving along the South Fork of the Merced River not far from Wawona on the road to Chinquapin I saw a duck riding buoyantly on the little ripples along a gravel bank. It was a female Harlequin Duck, *Histrionicus histrionicus*. I had a very good opportunity to observe the purplish tinge of its wings. Later I went to the California Academy of Sciences, where Mr. James Moffitt kindly showed me specimens and paintings of this species and I thus confirmed my field identification of the bird.

Junea W. Kelly, Alameda, California. November 1, 1940.



### November Field Trip

The November field trip, taken on the 17th, was made up of two sections. One group met at Ross Station and went via Phoenix Lake; the other group went on to Fairfax and via Deer Park to meet the first group for luncheon at Lake Lagunitas. The day was somewhat overcast but pleasant.

The outstanding observations were an Anthony Green Heron and nine male Wood Ducks on Phoenix Lake, a Brown Creeper bathing in an inlet of the lake, and five male American Golden-eyes on Lake Lagunitas. The Golden-eyes and Wood Ducks were in parade formation.

The group starting from Ross Station observed the following thirty-seven species:

Pied-billed Grebe	Red-shafted Flicker	Hermit Thrush
Anthony Green Heron	Willow Woodpecker	Golden-crowned Kinglet
Mallard	Black Phoebe	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Wood Duck	Coast Jay	Audubon Warbler
Ring-necked Duck	California Jay	Purple Finch
Canvas-back Duck	Crow	House Finch
Lesser Scaup	Nicasio Chickadee	Pine Siskin
American Golden-eye	Plain Titmouse	San Francisco Towhee
Red-breasted Merganser	Brown Creeper	Brown Towhee
Turkey Vulture	Wren-tit	Junco
Coot	Winter Wren	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Anna Hummingbird	Western Robin	Song Sparrow
Belted Kingfisher		

Ten additional species were noted by the group from Fairfax, making a list for the day of forty-seven species:

Sharp-shinned Hawk	Cedar Waxwing	Willow Goldfinch
Sparrow Hawk	Varied Thrush	Green-backed Goldfinch
Bewick Wren	Meadowlark	Nuttall Sparrow
Western Bluebird		

Twelve members attending were Mesdames Courtright, Otis H. Smith; Misses Blake, Cohen, MacIver, McCarthy, Papina, Paroni, Sterne; Messrs. Heyneman, Kirker, Pike and seven guests: Mrs. Anabel; Misses Paroni, Wilkie, Young; Messrs. Robert Provoo, Maurice Ed Peret from Switzerland and Cornelius Tobias from Hungary.

Mary L. Courtright, Historian.

## Golden Eagle Electrocuted near Dixon, California

On October 23, 1939, while hunting jack rabbits with Mr. Gunnar Larson of Berkeley, I found a dead Golden Eagle, *Aquila chrysaetos canadensis*, in immature plumage on the ground in an alfalfa field belonging to Mr. Manuel George near Dixon, Solano County, California.

At first I was of the impression that the bird had been shot; however, closer observation showed that the feathers on the top of the head had been singed and the ends of the primary feathers of the right wing were burned. A three-wire transmission line directly overhead indicated that the bird had come into contact therewith causing a short circuit, and a tragic ending for the bird.

Emerson A. Stoner, Benicia, California.



## Audubon Notes

**December Meeting:** The regular meeting will be held on Thursday evening, the 12th, at 8 o'clock, in the Ferry Building.

The speaker will be Mr. Bert Harwell, taking for his subject "The Program of the National Audubon Society in California." The lecture will be illustrated.

Members may bring guests.



**December Field Trip** will be taken to the campus of the University of California on Sunday, the 15th. Members and friends will meet at Oxford and University Avenue about 9:30 a.m. After luncheon those who wish to do so may proceed by automobile to Berkeley Aquatic Park, which is daily proving of greater interest.

San Francisco members should take the 8:30 a.m. Line "K" (Berkeley College Avenue Line) of the Key Route,

from San Francisco Terminal and enter the campus by way of Sather Gate, or if still running, they may come by Interurban to Berkeley Station. Bring luncheon. Leaders to be appointed.



**November Meeting:** The 279th regular meeting was held on Thursday, the 14th, in the Ferry Building with twenty-five members and guests present. President B. K. Dunshee presiding.

Mr. B. D. Dexter of Berkeley was elected to membership.

Mrs. Kelly reported seeing seventeen Wood Ducks, one male Hooded Merganser, and 50 Ring-necked Ducks on Phoenix Lake, November 8th.

The speaker of the evening was Mr. Joseph Dixon, who gave a talk on the "Endangered Species," both of birds and mammals, illustrating his talk with some very beautiful Kodochrome slides.

## Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

### For the Study and the Protection of Birds

President.....Mr. B. K. Dunshee....Room 714, 245 Market St., San Francisco  
 Corresponding Secretary.....Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....519 California St., San Francisco  
 Treasurer.....Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.